

CJTF-HOA sailors train elite forces at Bernez in Arta

Story and photos by Cpl. G. Lane Miley

ARTA, Djibouti – Elite Djiboutian soldiers from Bernez, a training base here, spent Feb. 24 to 26 learning basic first aid from sailors assigned to Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa.

During the nearly weeklong evolution the soldiers learned splints, bleeding control, patient transport and preventive medicine under the direction of Navy Lt. Richard D. Heridia and Petty Officer 2nd Class Joshua Sandoval.

“The American training is very good. We are making good relationships and gaining good knowledge,” said Sgt. Youssouf Moussa Farah, an infantryman at Bernez. “It is very interesting. This has been a very good week. We are glad to work with the U.S. military.”

Farah also serves as a nurse and a translator for his fellow Djiboutian soldiers. The 34-year-old soldier has served in the military since the age of 15 and held an integral role in the training because of his ability to share his medical insight and pass what the sailors explained to the soldiers at Bernez.

“There’s the language barrier, so you don’t know if they’re getting it, but when you see them do the splints right you know they learned something,” explained Sandoval, a corpsman and the preventative medicine operations chief for the CJTF-HOA surgeon cell.

The training began in a classroom environment where Sandoval and Heridia showed their pupils examples of injuries they would likely come across in combat. The American instructors simulated injuries such as exposed bones with visual training aids and had the soldiers respond to the wounds.

Sandoval said with American troops, there would be more written tests, but because of the language barrier he and Heridia used more hands-on exercises.

“Today when we did those exercises we saw they knew how to do it,” said Sandoval, a Pomona, Calif., native.

Heridia and Sandoval showed the Djiboutian soldiers how to use splints and also suggested makeshift braces out of gear the soldiers could find in a field environment. They stressed to the soldiers the importance of supporting the patient’s neck while moving them onto stretchers and taught them improvised transports for times when gurneys are not available.

Sandoval and Heridia both watched the knowledge they passed to the local soldiers bear fruit before their eyes.

“The soldiers were really attentive, they seemed interested and they retained it,” said Heridia, an Elmwood Park, Ill., native.

Overall, the soldiers at Bernez said the training was good, and it proved to be very beneficial. The infantrymen said they feel better prepared now should the need to give medical care to one another arise.

“Every culture in the world has their own knowledge, and it is good that we share that knowledge,” Moussa said.



(Above) Petty Officer 2nd Class Joshua Sandoval, a corpsman, listens to Sgt. Youssouf Moussa Farah as he explains to his fellow soldiers the importance of supporting the patient’s neck during transport Feb. 26. Sandoval, an instructor for the week-long training evolution used Farah, a nurse and translator for Bernez – an elite Djiboutian training camp here – to teach the soldiers basic first aid. (Below) Two Djiboutian soldiers apply first aid to a simulated victim during a practical application exercise here Feb. 26.

